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LEVELS OF LIVING IN MAINE

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LEVELS OF LIVING IN MAINE 1/

Introduction

The story of agriculture in Maine is the story of a slow but unrelenting change. It is the story of a continual shift in the usefulness of land and of Yankee ingenuity in adjusting to meet the shift. The changing usefulness of land caused by a changing economy has brought the decline of certain communities and their partial reversion to forest while bringing increased prosperity to others. The welfare of the people of Maine is vitally involved in every phase of this process.

Maine's history may be divided into three distinct periods: (1) the initial period of settlement, (2) the period of rapidly expanding settlement, and (3) the period of intensification in settlement and in the use of land.

During the pioneer period, settlers struggled to obtain a foothold along the Maine coast. One hundred and forty years passed between the first settlements and the beginning of rapid expansion. During this time, farming was carried on inside a local economy with lumber and fishing providing most of the limited cash available. In this first period farmers produced by hand methods the food required for home use and for barter in the community.

1/ Grateful acknowledgment is made for the aid throughout the project given by Smith C. McIntire, State BAE Representative for Maine, and by Walter C. McKain, Jr., Sociologist, Bureau of Agricultural Economics; for the cooperation of the Maine State Bureaus of Education and Health in making available detailed information; for the aid and cooperation of Miss Estelle B. Nason, Home Demonstration Leader, and of Stacy R. Miller, State Land Use Planning Specialist; and for the invaluable work by Maine's fourteen Home Demonstration Agents in conducting meetings and gathering information.

Maine was most nearly a prosperous agricultural State in the second period of that expansion. Although the timber stands were gone from many communities, more distant stands still kept the mills running and provided employment for many rapidly growing villages. Maine farmers, by growing the products needed by lumber workers and the New England villages and cities, obtained very profitable new markets to replace those lost by the decline of their local timber operations.

The third period of Maine's agriculture, the period in which we now live, has been one of contraction in some of the established land uses and of intensification in others. Changed local and national economic conditions have brought this about. Land that during the initial period of settlement was valuable for its timber no longer has salable lumber on it. Land that during the period of expansion could compete successfully in a New England economy found itself unable to compete in a national economy that embraced the large fertile areas of the Midwest.

Results of this widening economy are apparent from the variations of success in different areas. While some farms have increased in size and production, others have been abandoned. While some communities have grown and enjoyed greater prosperity, others have declined in population and wealth.

But Maine farmers in general have adjusted themselves to their changing situation. They have shifted enterprises, gone into industry, scaled down their standards, or developed the tourist business. They have made these adjustments partly because of their desire for a better livelihood and partly because of necessity.

The same self-reliance which helped Yankee pioneers to carve a

State out of the wilderness has helped Maine farmers to meet new economic conditions. The impression is gained that agrarian Maine long since has quit bemoaning or even questioning the fate of its business and has worked out alternatives, or has accepted the consequences.

It is something of this spirit of self-reliance, coupled perhaps with a certain fatalism, which has appeared to hamper at times Government efforts to aid farm enterprise in Maine. It is this, too, which in certain hardpressed farming areas makes intensely individualistic farmers impatient of programs designed to assist the distressed part-time farmers of their towns; and, it was with this in mind that leaders in land use planning have tried to begin the program on a broad base with cooperation from all groups concerned.

Yellow was the color used on 1938 land use maps to designate "land in farms which should remain in agriculture." Rare indeed was the farmer committee which scrimped its yellow crayon, for it was hard to conclude that blame must fall on the soil--the same soil which once had nourished, and nourished well, its Yankee freeholders. A puzzled Waldo man, from the rolling country which thirty years ago was shipping its hay in carloads to the Boston market, grumbles, "By gorries, it can't be all the fault 'the land."

Yet for every patch of yellow, a town planning committee had said, and the county committee had agreed, "This land can today provide farm families with an adequate living." Extension agents had some reason to be skeptical, and administrators wondered if they and their committees were in complete agreement as to the nature of an adequate livelihood. They wondered, too, if the farm women, less preoccupied with the business

affairs of agrarian life, and more concerned with the problems of keeping families, might not have something significant to say about the land's ability to support them. A need was felt for more information about the way rural people live in Maine, and about their attitudes toward rural living.

For this information, the most promising source appeared to be in the membership of women's Farm Bureau groups. These women are predominantly farming people; Farm Bureau groups are found in a large majority of populated rural towns; and, significantly for the study, their members are accustomed to working with Extension agents. In addition, Extension administrators felt strongly the need for including Farm Bureau women in the land use planning work which had, at first, been confined exclusively to men's groups. It was thought that some attention in the women's groups could profitably be turned from the perfecting of individual skills to the consideration of community social and economic problems, if Extension was to remain consistent in its avowed purpose of "improving the well-being of rural people in Maine." This levels of living study, conducted by the Extension Service with aid from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and beginning in November, 1939, was the result.

The study which was both educational and investigational in nature had three distinct aims. The first was to introduce rural women in the State to a consideration of problems involving the entire community. For the rural women, and for the Home Demonstration Agents through whom the work was presented, this was all but untrodden ground. That care was taken in laying the groundwork for the study is shown by a series of detailed mimeographed work outlines for the Home Demonstration Agents,

and by the fact that a short training school for them was held in this connection.

The second aim was to obtain from rural residents themselves an estimation in graphic form of living levels in various areas of their townships. The success as well as the results of this part of the survey depended on the skill with which a Home Demonstration Agent could draw from the group its real views by keeping expression of opinion reasonably close to the subject, and on her ability to conceal personal predilections without allowing the discussion to languish.

No attempt was made to define levels of living specifically but, so that the hundreds of committees might center their discussions around comparable themes, Home Demonstration Agents were given a rule-of-thumb definition for the concept. An area enjoying a high plane or level of living, it was explained, would be one in which the inhabitants possessed a high proportion of the things, material and nonmaterial, necessary to arrive at the state described by the phrase "living well." This left the way open for local committees to lay stress where they chose, but Agents were cautioned not to let over-talkative members dominate the groups' opinions, and to obtain from the women as full as possible a discussion of the range of important items making up the good life as they saw it.

A third aim of the study was to obtain some standardized measure of rural living levels in Maine--a yardstick by which the various judgments of committees could be compared, and a somewhat more objective estimate of living conditions in the various towns.

The present report is primarily concerned with the accomplishment

of this last aim and is divided into two parts. The first section states the procedures and methodology employed in this phase of the study. The second part contains some of the principal findings and a brief interpretation of them. 2/

I. Procedure And Methodology

Probably no one has isolated a level of living with sufficient accuracy to describe it in any but the most general terms, but use of the concept nevertheless continues to offer a convenient means of delimiting socio-economic groupings and cultural subareas. It is important, however, to understand what is and is not measured by any particular levels of living study in order to interpret the results fairly. Obviously it is impracticable, if not impossible, to segregate and measure each of the multitudes of items which must go to make up the plane on which a person or a group lives. The usual approach is to select some few items which are thought indicative of the rest, and assign value to them in accordance with their representativeness and with their ability to discriminate between levels. The problem presented by weighting the items is evident.

Again, use of the concept "level" indicates that in the mind of the investigator there must be both an "up" and a "down," so that his idea as to what constitutes high and low levels must condition the type of indicators to be used. It will be remembered that a high level is

2/ A fuller report has been made elsewhere concerning the committees' work in distinguishing levels of living within towns and arriving, through discussion, at ideas of what they felt to be important considerations in determining these levels. Report Of The Maine Land Use Project 1940. Miller, Stacy R. Mimeographed publication, Community Land Use Committees, Maine Agricultural Extension Service, U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics cooperating.

indicated by possession of a high proportion of desirable things. People strive to possess those things which they deem desirable; consequently, the investigator must consider standards 3/ in measuring levels of living. Thus, it was important to find what things rural Maine people want.

There was still another reason for wanting to find what things the rural women consider desirable. Since the objective portion of the study is to be used in comparison with local committee reports, and since any discrepancies between the two which seem to discredit the latter are certain to suffer the most critical scrutiny in future Farm Bureau meetings, it was necessary that the technical survey take into account items of which the rural women recognize the significance. It was important, in other words, that criteria of living levels be not far different from those the women claimed to be using.

To obtain some measure of rural standards of living, Home Demonstration Agents were asked to select from 6 to 10 representative farm women in each county and send to them copies of the accompanying letter and ranking card (see Appendix 1 and 2). Averages of ranks assigned by these women and the Home Demonstration Agents to items on the card are as follows:

High level of health.....	2	Telephone service.....	7
High school education....	3	Bathrooms.....	8
Running water.....	4	Automobiles.....	8
Electricity.....	5	Central heating.....	9
Good roads.....	6	Radios.....	10
Well-kept buildings.....	6	Mechanical refrigeration....	11

In a rough way the results of this preliminary investigation gave

3/ Standards of living generally refer to what one considers as ideal living conditions as compared to levels of living which refer to conditions as they actually exist.

some basis for assigning value to items on the level of living schedule.

The preliminary study also helped to determine items to be included in the schedule. "Refrigerator" was not included in the final schedule, while "power-driven washing machine," suggested by farm women, was added. It was not possible, as had been hoped, to get material regarding roads.

The survey schedule (Appendix 4), because of the conditions under which it was to be used, was an extremely simple one, and the items on it were confined to those which could be measured easily or simply to those which noted the presence or absence of certain facilities. The information to be considered was answered only partially by material on the schedules. The remainder was obtained from official reports of minor civil divisions in the State. The following are the factors used to determine levels of living:

1. Health, measured by corrected mortality rates for deaths--not including still-birth or accidental deaths--during a five-year period beginning in 1933. In order to minimize what are in Maine considerable differences in age-distribution patterns, largely because of widely varying birth-rates, death-rates were computed on the basis of town age distributions reported by the 1930 census. Chance for the accumulation of error because of the use of population estimates and figures based on interpolation, and because of limited age data for small towns, makes the measure far from ideal although it seems the best available at this time.

Availability of medical service has an undoubted influence on a community's health, but either the sample obtained by the

investigation was inadequate to show this, or other factors, such as quality of medical care, road conditions, varying fees, and differing client-loads, obscured the relationship. So the household's average distance to a doctor, having no relation in this study to the death rates as described above, was discarded in favor of the latter index.

2. Extent of secondary education. Theoretically, free secondary education is available to every grammar-school graduate in Maine. In practice, nevertheless, a number of things conspire to keep a sizable but gradually decreasing proportion of adolescents from taking advantage of this opportunity. Variations between towns in this regard were measured in the present study by computing the ratios of students reported in high school and academies, to total available secondary-school populations (numbers of persons aged 14-18, inclusive, as reported by the School Census of 1939).

3. Presence of conveniences as follows:

Electricity	Telephone
Running water	Radio
Complete bathroom	Washing Machine
Central heating	Truck or automobile

Explanation made to Farm Bureau women regarding these items is shown in the letter in Appendix 3.

4. General condition of buildings. This item admitted of most error due to subjective judgment but it was thought that, in general, rural people would be in substantial agreement as to what constitutes good and poor dwellings. They were asked to rate the houses as being in A, B, or C condition ("good,"

"fair," "poor"), and the measure for each town was based on the resultant score. "A" buildings were scored 3, and the others 2 and 1 respectively. The total of these scores divided by the maximum possible score for the town's sample gave the housing-condition index.

5. Degree of "crowding." In many rural areas of the State, living space apparently does not constitute a problem. To measure variation in this regard, an index of rooms per person was computed for each household and for the sample in each town.

It was impracticable in Maine to bring all rural families or even a large proportion of them into the survey, but organization of the Farm Bureau groups made it possible to reach what is believed to be a representative sample of rural households. Two hundred and forty-one towns were included, with a total of 9,589 households, representing 12 percent ^{4/} of the population in towns covered by the study. Relative sizes of samples obtained are presented by counties in Table 1. In each town Extension agents met with a committee of from 5 to 10 rural women selected to represent geographically the area of the township.

It is, of course, impossible to generalize accurately about the three hundred-odd meetings held during December and January. Countless degrees and combinations of local pride and candid objectivity, of misunderstanding and prudent commonsense, of easy volubility and uncompre-

^{4/} This does not include towns where the population is greater than 5,000. For these towns, with cities and larger villages, Extension agents chose representatives from rural portions only, so samples are not comparable to those for rural townships. Unincorporated towns, for the most part uninhabited, were also omitted.

Table 1:- Size of Samples Obtained in Towns
Covered by the Study, by Counties

County	Estimated Population 1935	Sample	Percent
1. Androscoggin	13,755	1,331	7.6
2. Aroostook	32,223	3,172	9.8
3. Cumberland	17,236	1,638	9.5
4. Franklin	14,030	1,403	10.0
5. Hancock	15,875	2,294	14.0
6. Kennebec	20,891	1,843	8.8
7. Knox	13,497	1,255	9.3
8. Lincoln	9,268	1,377	14.9
9. Oxford	21,002	2,938	14.0
10. Penobscot	22,957	3,048	13.2
11. Piscataquis	11,577	1,703	14.7
12. Sagadahoc	4,768	585	12.3
13. Somerset	20,303	2,610	13.0
14. Waldo	17,020	2,748	16.1
15. Washington	11,686	1,951	16.7
16. York	20,966	2,121	10.1
Total	267,054	32,017	12.0

hending silence, kept any two meetings from bearing much of a resemblance--
even two in one county. But a purely imaginary "average" group might have
proceeded in this manner:

The Home Demonstration Agent, introduced by "Madam Chairman," began
with a brief resume of "what the men have been doing"; then followed it
with an outline of the purpose of the day's meeting. A discussion followed
during which there emerged the several factors which the committee would
take into consideration in determining the levels of living. These were
taken down for inclusion in her typewritten notes by the Agent. The dis-
tinction between intangible standards of living which a community may hold
to, and the level at which its material and nonmaterial possessions place
it, was drawn carefully in the beginning by the Agent and emphasized later
if group members began talking vaguely in terms of "nice people," and "...
standards just as high as anybody's."

Next, after presenting the committee with Geological Survey topographical maps of the town, the Agent asked them to decide if there were areas in which the inhabitants' living level differed markedly from the rest. After further discussion the members were asked to classify these areas within one of four groups. At this point standards once more were dissociated from levels. Roads in the areas under discussion (there are virtually no houses in Maine not built along the roads) were now colored in accordance with the women's judgment of the various levels of living represented, and notes were taken by the Home Demonstration Agent about their comments regarding each area.

After lunch (served in the Grange Hall where the committees met) the women were each asked to fill out one of the survey schedules, giving information about their own households if they were willing, and those of four immediate neighbors living on the same road. Instructions given by the Home Demonstration Agents were the same as those in the accompanying letter (Appendix 3), used in a "follow-up" to obtain more information in certain towns. Schedules were simple enough so that the women were able, with but few exceptions, to give readily the requested information. In order to guard against an arbitrary selection of households on their part, they were cautioned not to omit any homes in the sequence.

To arrive at an index of living levels for the towns, information in the schedules was tabulated in the following manner. Proportions of households possessing each of the above-mentioned facilities, in samples for each town, were computed. Each of these percentages was then converted into a positive or negative score in terms of standard deviations above or below the average percentage, or the percentage for the total sample.

These were as follows:

Deaths per thousand.....	13.5	Telephone.....	52%
Rooms per person.....	2.5	Washing Machine.....	60%
Condition of buildings.....	76% ^a	Running Water.....	66%
High-school-age youths in		Electricity.....	69%
secondary schools.....	52%	Automobile.....	78%
Houses with: Bathroom.....	29%	Radio.....	82%
Furnace.....	33%		

Measures for health, housing, and degree of crowding were similarly changed to standard units, but in the case of the first (corrected death-rates), the signs were reversed. Computation of the housing index has already been discussed.

"Unweighted" level-of-living indices were then obtained by adding algebraically the scores for individual items and converting these totals to positive values by the addition of a constant. Actually, scores were weighted by this procedure with respect to the position of averages for the State and their dispersion among towns in the sample.

An attempt was then made to weight item-scores according to the importance assigned to them by farm women in the preliminary study. Weights of 4 were arbitrarily given to the first three items on the list on page 7, of 3 to scores for electricity and housing, and of 2 to measures for bathroom, telephone, washing machine, and automobile. The rest were given a weight of 1. Results of this process, however, indicate that weighting did not materially affect the position of scores for the towns. The index of simple linear correlation between weighted and unweighted scores was $.96 \pm .005$.

a. Represents percentage which scores for condition of buildings were of maximum possible score.

The reason for close correspondence between weighted and unweighted indices becomes apparent when scores for the individual items receiving highest weights are compared with total indices. The correlation ratios are: health, $.08 \pm .066$; secondary education, $.41 \pm .051$; running water, $.71 \pm .032$; condition of buildings, $.60 \pm .041$; electricity, $.72 \pm .031$.

A division into five classes was then made of indices derived from the objective portion of the study. The distribution of scores was symmetrical, approaching normality, with the exception of a small "clump" of low scores composed mainly of towns in the St. John River valley which did not enter into the women's phase of the work. Table 2 shows the scores, distributed by class intervals of five.

Table 2:- Frequency Distribution of Standardized
Level of Living Scores, by Towns

Scores	Frequency of Towns	Scores	Frequency of Towns
0 -- 4.9	3	35 -- 39.9	29
5 -- 9.9	6	40 -- 44.9	38
10 -- 14.9	3	45 -- 49.9	20
15 -- 19.9	15	50 -- 54.9	25
20 -- 24.9	21	55 -- 59.9	16
25 -- 29.9	26	60 -- 64.9	6
30 -- 34.9	30	65 -- 69.9	3

Total 241

Skewness (a_3) of the distribution, which was .008 without these seven towns, became -.22 when they were added. It was therefore decided to add their scores to the lowest class, the limits of which were computed without regard to the seven lowest scores. The five classes were determined by dividing the array into five equal intervals.

High-level areas are thus characterized by possession of the greatest number of household conveniences and community services, such as

education and medical care. For the 15 towns placed in level A, proportions of households having these conveniences are as follows:

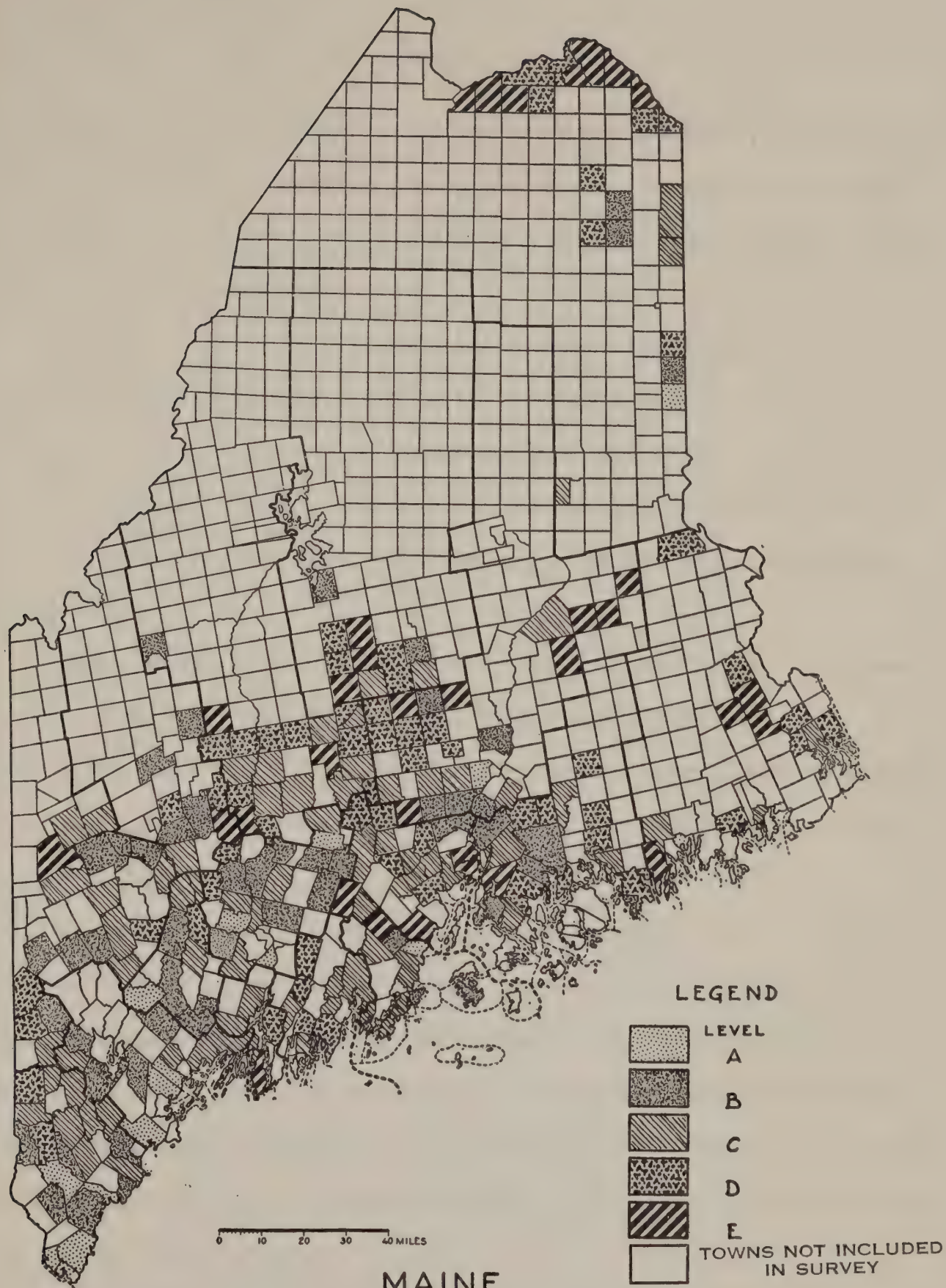
Running water	89 %	Radio	95 %
Complete bathroom	65	Electricity	95
Furnace	63	Washing Machine	76
Telephone	70	Automobile	89

There were on the average nearly four rooms per person in these households, and 95 percent of the dwellings was said to be in fair or good condition. Two-thirds of the 15 towns had corrected death rates (1933-1937) lower than that for the State as a whole, and 57 percent of their youths of high school age was receiving secondary education in 1939.

II. Findings And Interpretations

Positions of towns in each of the five levels are shown in Figure 1. Occurrence of areas with highest living levels is more frequent in Maine's southern and western counties. Towns along the main highways of York, Cumberland, Androscoggin, and Kennebec Counties appear to be favored by the traffic, while the group of towns south of the arterial highways in Sagadahoc and Lincoln Counties apparently form an area of medium to low living levels.

Population concentration evidently has a definite influence upon living conditions of Maine people. The State has four centers of population: around Portland; near Auburn and Lewiston; in the vicinity of cities along the southern part of the Kennebec River; and in the region of Bangor and Brewer. It is in these areas that A and B levels of living are most frequently found. This is partly due to the fact that some of the indicators used to measure living conditions, such as electricity and running water, are made cheaper and more easily available by the presence



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FIGURE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF LIVING LEVELS ACCORDING TO STANDARDIZED SCORING METHOD

of a large body of consumers. It is also arguable, however, that rural people in the vicinity of urban places become more conscious of the need for facilities which city people enjoy, and therefore make greater efforts to obtain similar advantages.

Isolated areas of fairly high levels occur in Aroostook County's rich potato-farming district, and in key highway towns of the county. Other small high-level areas are found in towns supported principally by out-of-state money brought in either by tourists and recreation seekers or by residents of other States who own summer homes and other property in Maine.

Towns placed in the lowest levels on the basis of this study are those in which there were the largest proportions of dwellings whose condition was rated "poor," in which secondary education was lowest, corrected death rates highest, and the fewest homes were provided with the conveniences listed above.

The greatest concentration of low-level areas is found in the St. John River Valley in northern Aroostook County. These are principally French-speaking communities with larger numbers of part-time farmers. Many factors are responsible for the poor housing and health conditions in the area, but the situation is complicated by sharp cultural differences between the people of French-Canadian stock in this area, and the inhabitants of the rest of Maine.

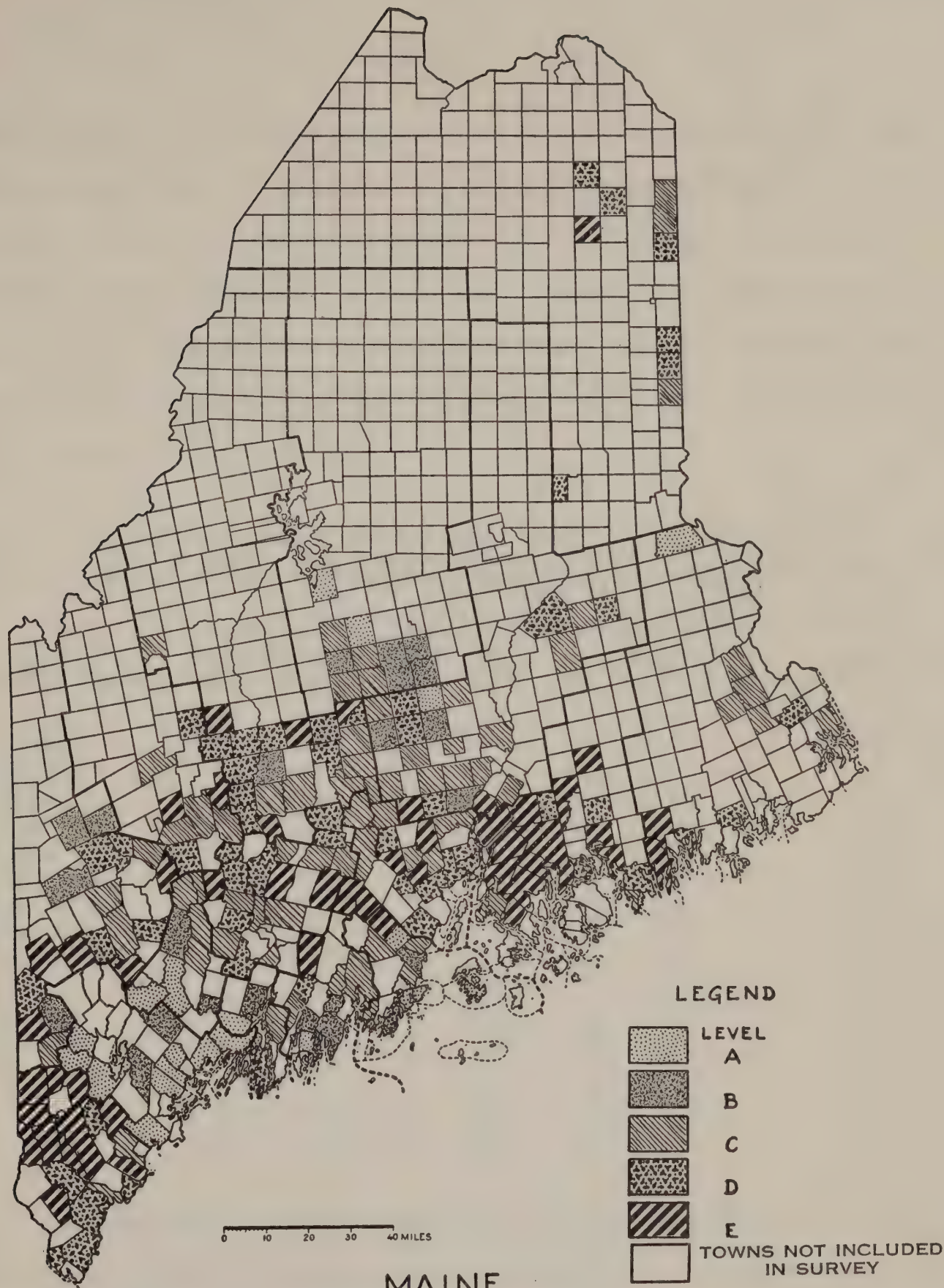
Most of the other towns with low living levels are in Somerset, Piscataquis, Penobscot, Waldo, and Washington Counties. Many are towns on the edge of the uncleared "wild lands," with problems largely caused by the loss of an economic base. In some cases, decline of the lumber

industry has been the principal factor. In others, unsuccessful competition with more efficient producing areas to the West, and the loss of markets for farm products have been responsible for the decline. Many tracts of cleared land have gone back to woodland. Others are on the way, or should be. It is probable that in a number of instances most of the land in these towns is unable to support successful commercial farming, and quite possibly always has been unable to do so.

The ratings obtained by the above method were compared with the subjective ratings made by Farm Bureau women. In order to make comparable the two scorings, towns were first grouped into five classes on the basis of the areas, assigned to one or more of four different levels by the women. Towns with a high proportion of the area in the first level were marked A; those with the area divided between the first and second level were marked B, and so on. Varying population density along different roads in any one town was ignored, and it is possible that different results might have been obtained by taking this into account.

In figure 2 are summarized the opinions of local farm women as to living levels in their towns. Comparison with Figure 1 shows considerable differences between the town, both in numbers of towns placed in the various levels, and their distribution. Table 3 further compares the ratings. Similarity of ratings in some counties suggests the possibilities of the influence of Extension programs. But before the attempt is made to analyze some of the differences, certain facts should be pointed out relating to bases on which the two ratings were made.

In the first place, the standardized index was based mainly on material factors which, although they are more easily measured than non-



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FIGURE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF LIVING LEVELS ACCORDING TO OPINION OF LOCAL RESIDENTS

material ones, do not give a complete idea of the total content of living which is implied by the term "level of living." People living in areas which are rated low on the basis of material items may have nonmaterial advantages which compensate for this lack. Therefore, a study based on different factors might give them a higher rating than they received here. Some of these intangibles may have been taken into account, to some extent, by the ratings of rural residents.

Table 3:- Rural Residents' Self-Ratings Compared with Standardized Level of Living Scores for 223 Towns,^{a/} by Counties

Towns in which Residents' Ratings were to Standardized Scores as Follows:							
Counties	Same		Higher		Lower		Total
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	
Twin	6	46	7	54	-	--	13
Aroostook	3	30	-	--	7	70	10
Cumberland	5	42	7	58	-	--	12
Franklin	1	12	1	12	6	75	8
Hancock	3	16	-	--	16	84	19
Kennebec	3	17	-	--	15	83	18
Knox-Lincoln	8	40	10	50	2	10	20
Oxford	6	33	3	17	9	50	18
Penobscot	8	35	10	43	5	22	23
Piscataquis	2	20	8	80	-	--	10
Somerset	9	43	5	24	7	33	21
Waldo	6	32	5	26	8	42	19
Washington	3	25	6	50	3	25	12
York	-	--	-	--	20	100	20
Total	63	28	62	28	98	44	223

It is possible, too, that items which local residents thought most important as indices of living conditions were not the ones used to measure living levels of the objective rating. Doubtless the emphasis placed upon different items varied considerably from town to town. Nevertheless, items

^{a/} In 18 towns no ratings were made by residents.

in the level of living schedule were the ones that entered most frequently into the discussion of Farm Bureau committees. Although the women may have made certain mental reservations these items were, in general, the factors which they claimed to be using in their judgments.

Finally, unlike the ratings which the women gave to towns as shown by Figure 2, the ratings which were assigned on the basis of the standardized index carried no connotation of relative merit. Thus, towns which were placed in level A, according to the standardized index, are not necessarily described as having a "good" or "adequate" level of living in an absolute sense. They merely have the highest ratings of the 241 towns included in the study. It is possible, of course, that these ratings would still fall below what is considered the most desirable condition or level. The women in the Farm Bureau committees, on the other hand, did not assign areas to level A unless they felt that people living there possessed a high proportion of material and nonmaterial assets which it is most desirable to have.

A comparison of rankings given to towns by the two methods gives some insight, therefore, into the relative standards of rural people in the various areas. It is not unreasonable to assume that in towns where the two ratings agree, whatever the level may be, the residents' idea of a high level of living is represented approximately by conditions in the towns which were assigned to level A by the standardized scoring procedure.

Self-ratings in 28 percent of the towns agreed with those made by the objective method. Women in another 28 percent rated their towns higher than was warranted by index-scores. Presumably, these women's ideas of excellent living conditions did not require the presence of all

the material assets possessed by the 15 A-level towns. Or, perhaps, they would be content to rate as "high" an area in which a smaller proportion of the inhabitants possessed these advantages. Forty-four percent of the groups rated the living levels in their towns lower than the levels on which the standardized score placed them. The women in this group evidently would consider conditions in the A-level towns to be inadequate for a community whose people "live well."

Further comparison of town rankings by the two methods shows that there is a definite pattern in the differences. Table 4 gives the proportion of towns on each level which overrated or underrated themselves in relation to the standardized scoring.

Table 4:- Rural Residents' Self-Ratings Compared with Standardized Level of Living Scores for 223^a Towns, by Levels

(Standard Scoring)	Proportions of Towns in which Residents' Ratings were to Standardized Scores:		
	Same (Pct.)	Above (Pct.)	Below (Pct.)
A	27	--	73
B	15	13	71
C	39	23	38
D	28	34	38
E	25	75	--
Total	28	28	44

Three-fourths of the towns in level A rated themselves too low; three-fourths of those in level E rated themselves too high. This tends to bear out the observation that the wants of human beings expand as their former desires become satisfied; that those who are in possession of the most material advantages are usually the ones most keenly aware of the

a. In 18 towns no ratings were made by residents.

things which they and their communities still lack.

The study shows clearly a number of the needs which are felt by rural inhabitants of Maine. Even in areas rated highest in the scale, some factors (the prevalence of secondary education, for example) still show a need for improvement. Since there is a positive relationship between individual items and the total index, presence or absence of the items in different communities is indicated roughly by Figure 1. The lowest levels represented show areas where there is a need for nearly all conveniences and services.

A greater knowledge of people's attitudes toward local conditions can be of value to action agencies interested in the problems of rural Maine people. Other things being equal, more cooperation with action programs will be given in the localities where residents feel most strongly the need for improvements.

It should not be concluded, however, that because the wants of residents in areas with the lowest living levels appear to be most limited, these people should simply be encouraged to desire more things. Very possibly their location with respect to soils and markets renders it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain the cash income necessary to obtain many of the material things which go with higher living levels. It may be, in such cases, that the best use of effort on the part of action agencies concerned would not be to stimulate wants, but rather to encourage a realistic and forward-looking awareness, on the part of rural people, as to their own potentialities and those of the land on which they live. If such an awareness can be developed, then need for stimulating the desires of people probably should not cause concern.

In low-level areas where the outlook holds little promise of considerable improvement, and where removal of the present generation of people to more favorable areas seems out of the question, rural planners will doubtless profit by devoting attention to obtaining improvements in living levels which do not involve much more cash income. The emphasis in such localities should be quite different from that in areas where conditions warrant attempts to gain greater returns from the land.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
STATE OF MAINE

College of Agriculture of the
University of Maine and the
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Cooperating

Extension Service

Dear

During the coming winter we plan to make a study of living conditions in rural Maine. But before beginning the study, we are anxious to find out from qualified residents throughout the State their ideas as to what are the important factors in an adequate level of living for their communities. It is to this end we are asking your help.

Enclosed with this letter is a list of items, of varying importance, but all contributing to the satisfaction of some groups in one area or another in the United States. What we should like to have you do is this:

Rank the items by order of their importance in contributing to what you consider a desirable level of living for your community. You would then place the numeral 1 in the square opposite the item which you consider most important, 2 opposite the next most important and so on. Please read the entire list before ranking any items.

We realize that many of the things mentioned may be of almost equal importance but try to place them as near to their proper order as you can. If in your mind, good roads, let us say, are just as important to the community as are electric lights but you have ranked the two items third and fourth respectively, this will not detract in any way from the value of your rating. The important thing here (if the above happened to be the order in which you ranked roads and electricity) would be that you did not consider the two items to be widely different in importance and so place them far apart in the scale.

Remember too, that although members of your community may already possess several of the factors in the list, this will not lessen their importance in your rating, which is on the basis of their importance in contributing to the most desirable level of living for the community. Conversely, you should be careful not to let the fact that you do not have one or more of the items make you give them greater importance than they deserve.

And finally, if there are additional items which you consider important, please add them in the space provided and rank them with the rest.

Cordially yours,

Home Demonstration Agent.

APPENDIX II

ITEMS	RANK
Central heating	
Mechanical refrigeration	
Hard-surface or gravel roads	
Well-kept buildings	
Water piped to houses	
Radios	
Automobiles	
High level of health	
Telephone service	
Bathrooms	
Electricity	
High school education	
OTHERS	
NAME.....	

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
STATE OF MAINE

College of Agriculture of the
University of Maine and the
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Cooperating

Extension Service

Dear

In connection with a study of Living Levels in rural Maine, which will assist us in planning future Extension programs, we have asked a number of residents in most Maine towns to help us by furnishing information regarding sample groups of households scattered throughout the township area. Some of this information for households in has already been given us at recent Farm Bureau meetings, but we are asking you to add to the material by filling out the enclosed schedule, so that the town will be more fully represented.

We should like to have you consider five neighboring households, including your own, along the road on which you live. (Please do not skip over any houses along the way.) Information on each household will go in one of the numbered rows of squares running across the page. You will note that most of the information asked for on the sheet is simply whether or not the house has certain conveniences -- running water, complete bathroom, etc. If the family does possess the convenience in question, please place a cross (X) in the appropriate square; if not, mark the square with a zero (0).

The items named at the heads of the columns may be explained as follows, in the order in which they appear:

1. If the property has land and barns available for farming, even though the owner may not do full-time farming, the square is to be marked F; otherwise it will be marked 0.
2. The total number of rooms does not include hallways, closets, or porches, but does include bathrooms and kitchens.
3. The information desired here is the number of miles to the nearest place where an M.D. can be called at least four days in the week.
4. If drinking water is available inside the house, either by means of a pump, or by a piped supply, mark the square X.
5. "Bathroom" refers to a complete installment, with tub, water closet, and washbowl.
- 6-9. These items are to be marked X or 0, as explained above.
10. Washing machines driven by electric or gasoline motor are "power Driven".
11. A will be used to indicate ownership of one or more autos; T to show ownership of a truck; A-T, both auto and truck; 0, neither.

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12. If the buildings are in excellent general condition, label the square A. B and C will designate sets of buildings in fair, and poor condition, respectively.
13. This column refers to the total number of persons living in the house.
14. In the last column, please give the number of children under 18 years of age who are living at home.

In summary, perhaps a sample will illustrate best how information on the households should be presented. Let us say that the neighboring household which you are first describing, is composed of six persons (two of whom are under 18), living in a farmhouse in fair condition, with seven rooms in it. Let us say further that the nearest doctor is nearly four miles away, that the house has running water, a telephone and radio, but that the bathroom fixtures have not been installed, that there is no furnace nor electricity, and that washing is done by hand. We will assume the family has a truck but no car. The squares in the top row of the sheet would then be filled as follows:

	Farmhouse or Other (F or O)	Number of Rooms	Miles to (nearest) Doctor	Running water at sink	Bathroom	Furnace	Telephone	Radio	Electricity	Power-driven washing machine	Automobile or truck (A or T)	Condition of buildings (A, B, or C)	Number of occupants under 18
1	F	7	4	X	O	O	X	X	O	O	T	B	6 2

When you have finished, please glance over the schedule to see that no square has been left vacant. If there is some item for which you cannot give an answer, or cannot make a rather accurate guess, please mark with a question mark (?).

Cordially yours,

Home Demonstration Agent

APPENDIX IV

Extension Service - UNIVERSITY OF MAINE - College of Agriculture
Town _____ LEVEL OF LIVING Date _____
SCHEDULE

[illegible]

